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Fluoride Emission Limit Set by Board of Health

Over the protest of one member, the State Board of Health in Helena Friday gave the Anaconda Aluminum Co. a directive to reduce its fluoride emissions sharply by June 30, 1973.

The board extended the proposed compliance deadline from June 30, 1972 by a year as recommended by Benjamin T. Wake, Montana's air pollution control director.

Under the new directive Anaconda Aluminum Co. will be required to reduce its fluoride emissions to 864 pounds per day compared to the present 4,500 and 7,500 that was the case in 1969 after completion of potlines four and five.

John Bartlett, state board of health member appointed by Governor Forrest Anderson,

was the only member asking for a delay in voting on compliance date until the September meeting.

The Whitefish pharmacist said: I favor what is proposed and the compliance date, but I don't feel I have all the facts to act upon at this time.

Bartlett told the Hungry Horse News: "I feel we had one side of the coin at our May 21 meeting, and that the company failed to present the other side."

Bartlett added that he hadn't any criticism of the local AAC management, but he felt New York representatives of the Anaconda Company were arbitrary and capricious.

He also asked that further information be obtained from Dr. C. C. Gordon, University of Montana botanist and the U. S. Public Health Service on fluoride damage.

He added that his concern was for the wage earner (AAC employs 1,024 in Columbia Falls), and that he didn't want the State Board of Health to take an action that would threaten the working man, his investment in a home, and the Flathead tax base.

That is why he was the one member of the State Board of Health to ask for delay until September.

Wake termed the 864 pound limit for fluoride emissions a day a reasonable standard and the fact that it would be difficult to meet is acknowledged, but I think we need it for that community."

Wake has also stated that the new standard is considerably more stringent than that in effect in Washington and Oregon and most if not all aluminum producing states.

On its part Anaconda Aluminum Co says it cannot meet the 864 pounds of fluoride a day requirement, but can achieve 2,500 pounds by 1972. This would be considerably less than when the AAC only had three potlines and vegetation damage was much less noticeable than now.

Installed at the AAC plant is a Venturi-Ducon scrubber on a test basis, with good results.

Proposed is a Ducon scrubber for each of the 30 scrubbing towers at the plant. Investment would be \$600,000; result would be to reduce fluoride emissions control from the present 92 per cent effectiveness to 98.5 per cent. This would be 2,500 pounds a day. The Ducon scrubbers are referred to as a "booster type" and installation would be over a period of two years. AAC

hasn't definitely decided to go ahead with the installations, apparently since the \$600,000 investment apparently won't satisfy the Montana Board of Health.

The Flathead had two of the six members of Montana's Board of Health at the Friday meeting.

Dr. George Gould, Babcock appointee from Kalispell, said that the company had ample opportunity to present its case May 21, and he voted with the other four members for compliance as recommended by Wake.

Chairman of Montana's Board of Health is Mrs. Virginia Mann, Missoula, who said: If the board adopted the standard (regarding AAC fluorides) "the heat would be on" the company to reduce pollution."

Variation request of Anaconda Wire and Cable Co., located adjacent to Anaconda Aluminum Co. was granted. The plant asked a variance (delay) in order to obtain and install equipment which will control hydrochloric acid and aluminum chloride emissions.

The request was granted with provision that the company make reports on progress of installation every four months.